

Service puts Yellow Pages on-line

Instant access to any Yellow Page listing is available at your fingertips, by subscribing to an on-line company called the Instant Yellow Page Service.

This service, a division of American Business Lists Inc. of Omaha, Neb., lets you do a nationwide search of all businesses with specific kinds of listings. It's accessible 24 hours a day from any personal computer with a modem — a device that allows your computer to send and receive data over telephone lines.

For example, if you're an airline or hotel, or you sell travel-related products to travel agents, you can look up, count or list all the travel agencies in the entire country. I tried out the count, just for fun, and the computer said there were 33,340 listings.

Without going to Peoria, Ill., or the library to fetch an outdated



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telephone book, you can look up listings in that city or any other by specifying a particular zip code.

And once you find the group of listings you want, you can narrow the field by specifying just those with a single-line listing in the Yellow Pages, those with a bold listing, those with a small advertisement within the column or those with larger display advertisements.

Here's how the service works:

The Instant Yellow Page computer has within it all Yellow Page listings in the country, updated as soon as each new book is published. Added to

each listing is a specific Standard Industrial Classification code, a number given by the government for every type of business in the country — from Abdominal Supports (wholesale), SIC 5122; to Zoos, SIC 7990.

Once you log on and give

your password, a menu lets you select the names you wish to view or print out. You can be as specific or as broad as you wish, combining SIC codes or geographic areas as you please. Peoria for example can be accessed using the first three digits of the postal zip code: 616.

Finally, you can see the listings selected on the screen, print them out or have them downloaded directly to your personal computer. If you desire thousands of names, the company can prepare a floppy disk for you, or print mailing labels and send them to you.

The cost for the service depends on how much you use it and how many listings you request. The rates are \$95 to sign up for a year, \$60 for a renewal, plus \$1 a minute of connect time, plus 10 cents for each listing, plus long-distance telephone costs. If you're on for a half hour, do some searches and retrieve a couple of hundred listings, it's easy to spend \$100. If you know exactly what you're looking for — it pays to plan carefully in advance — you might be able to

get on and off quickly for \$15.

Getting set up and learning how to use the system takes a little patience, but the technical support staff is friendly and usually walks you through the steps the first time. It took me about a half hour to become comfortable, and they stayed on the phone with me the entire time.

Is the Instant Yellow Page Service worth it? More than 5,000 current subscribers apparently think so. The data appears to be up to date and accurate, and the on-line feature is relatively easy to use. If your company sells to other businesses that are listed in the Yellow Pages, and if your sales department would be able to use the listings for direct mail and face-to-face prospecting, it could become a valuable sales tool.

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